

Comments on
Draft EIR Las Pilitas Quarry CUP and Reclamation Plan SCH# 2010071013
DRC 2009-00025

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The headwaters of the Salinas River watershed unite in a basin skirted by the Los Padres National Forest and the Pozo and Parkhill road boundaries of Santa Margarita in San Luis Obispo County. This rural area holds particular value as one of the remaining readily accessible vista loop roads that still has notably dark night skies, co-existing mixed-use traffic, ecological study and enjoyment areas, natural wildlife habitats, and sensitivity of residents toward good land stewardship with well coordinated land management plans.

The quality of this northern gateway area to the Los Padres National Forest is threatened by overdevelopment from planning proposals. Such rural areas are highly prized for recreational opportunities and refreshing offerings of natural serenity yet are also more vulnerable to overdevelopment due to rationalized pressures for overuse or incompatible encroachment from surrounding areas. Air, light, and sound pollution, discharge of groundwater basins, and destruction of benign uses are all current threats.

Summary of Points of Concern

With regard to consistency of application of county regulations, the proposal is clearly an **incompatible** use as suggested and sited; it is **destructive** of currently co-existing uses and not to be confused with or favorably compared to existing quarry use north of the plan area. Scoping comments regarding adverse impacts on regular and popular daily recreational bicycling and property values were ignored; all bicycling related activities and enterprises on this vista loop road would be completely jeopardized, property values would be diminished, and public access to views of the entire northern edge of the Los Padres National Forest would be impeded.

The proposal **misrepresents needs** for its product, implies advantages that do not exist, and diminishes **hazards** to integrating it with the community and natural surroundings. The quarry proposal is a private profit enterprise and of no public necessity or advantage. There is no existing production shortage of the resource in this area; still the plan suggests mass wasting and environmental alterations destructive of others' residential enjoyment and with effects that are permanent in terms of lifetimes. The plan includes 273 double-trailer gravel truck trips daily on the winding gateway roads to the National Forest with **significant unmitigable impact**. This quarry production would compromise safety for residents, endanger

water resources upon which residents depend, and lower both regional air quality and serenity from blasting and transportation noise.

This new quarry plan would be to the **detriment** of the area's current trade and commerce that have naturally developed around maintenance of the qualities of the region's rural character. Reversal of naturally developing trends toward benign use forms is contrary to logical development. There is insufficient reason for changing rural residential, recreational, and natural habitat uses of the areas that would be affected when taking the resource is unnecessary, poorly integrated production plans are wasteful of resources, and there is insufficient effort to minimize adverse impacts.

Particular Points of Concern

Unjustified proposed takings significantly and unreasonably **diminish**:

Residents' enjoyment of existing residential atmosphere and quality and value of properties, including quality of wildlife habitat; and

Residents' and frequent visitors' abilities to transit the area in reasonable security, including elimination of bicyclists' ability to safely use the vista loop roadway.

Unjustified proposed reduction of others' quality of life **adversely increases**:

Noise and air pollution;

Compromised security of quantity and quality of well water.

An arbitrarily chosen commercial truck smaller than the proposed size was observed in a single trip – just from the bridge to the “Highway 58 Curve” – crossing the lane markings 11 times, two of those completely over the center line into oncoming traffic.

Existing bicycle traffic and volumes and potential impacts thereon were ignored in the Draft EIR even though bicycling was highlighted in the scoping comments.

Improperly designated mitigation areas are nothing more than potential buffer zones; true mitigation areas would be set aside conservation easements not in close proximity to the proposed activity site.

There is no discussion of condemnation of abutting and nearby residences or of the better common alternative of waiting out the lifespan of the existing residents before taking over properties and changing area uses.

Noise threshold figures should be significantly lower in rural areas where natural ambient noise is low and punctuating sound, even at low levels, is much more noticeable and disturbing to both humans and wildlife under normal conditions. For example, the train

whistle in Santa Margarita can be heard by residents at the top of the grade of Park Hill Road just before Huer Huero Road.